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ABSTRACT

Communications internship requirements at Shorter College in Georgia probably do not differ significantly from those of other colleges, with the exception of one component, the special project. The objectives and procedures of the special project are clearly outlined in the Student Internship Guidelines drawn up by the department. Deciding the nature of the project and writing the prospectus are usually the most difficult aspects of the special project. It is essential to have a clear understanding between the student and the supervisor about the goals for the project and the terms of its evaluation. The department established the following guidelines or objectives for setting up the project: (1) identifying the need; (2) establishing goals and objectives; (3) providing a rationale; (4) identifying and securing resources; (5) determining a plan of action; (6) preparing a timeline; (7) preparing a budget; (8) submitting of a final product; (9) and developing a concrete assessment instrument. In a final paper students are asked to reflect on the project from its beginning to its completion, examining it in terms of its adherence to a timetable and resources used. Student and supervisor comments written in the Special Project reports are usually very favorable toward the experience and reflect some of the learning that has taken place. Excerpts from these comments illustrate both student and supervisor exuberance for the special project. (Attachment contains explanatory material about "special projects.") (TB)

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ED 395 340

FOSTERING STUDENTS' SCHOLARSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

"A New Slant on Internships: Special Projects"

Speech Communication Association
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San Antonio, Texas

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FOSTERING STUDENTS' SCHOLARSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH
"A New Slant on Internships: Special Projects"

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Rationale

Internships have long been recognized as a strong pedagogical tool, if the student and supervisor have specific, targeted goals, if the student is allowed and encouraged to learn the work of the agency through first-hand experience, and has strong, knowledgeable supervision from the internship director in the company. Being confident that these standards are met can sometimes be the first challenge as internship arrangements are made.

Procedure

The procedure for Shorter College students to follow in obtaining and working in an internship are described fully in an Intern Handbook provided to each junior more than one semester prior to the time the internship will be done. Approximately two hundred hours of work must be completed for the six credit hours internship, which is required of each major in the Division of Communication Arts. Students are encouraged to complete their internship during the summer following their junior year, in order that they may devote full time to it.

The first step is a meeting with the Director of Internships at the college in order to determine specific interests, time, preferred geographical location, and a discussion of business contacts which the student and/or the division might possess.

Following this meeting, initial contacts are made by the student and/or the director, with frequent conferring as to progress being made. When possible sites have been located, formal interviews are arranged between the student and the business, using all job-seeking skills the student has acquired. After an agreement satisfactory to both student and business has been reached, the Director of Internships confers again with each and, if it meets all the requirements, the agreement is finalized.

The student arranges his/her work schedule with the supervisor, at a time agreeable to both, and the internship begins. Both know that they are encouraged to call the Director of Internships at the College at any time if problems or questions arise.

Seminars

During the summer (or semester) two seminars are held with the interns for the purposes of sharing experiences and knowledge gained, and networking. The seminars are usually held at two or more seminar locations, with the intern supervisor in the company providing an introduction to the specific work of the company, introductions to other employees and their duties, and possibly a tour of the facilities. The student working at that particular location is asked to assist in the planning of the seminar, including arranging for a meeting room, the speaker and tour, and usually locating and reserving space at a suitable restaurant for lunch! During the seminars, students give reports of their work, career opportunities in the field, how the internship measures up to their expectations, organizational structure and interpersonal climate of the company, special projects, and other items needed for discussion.

Student Reports

While on the internship, the student submits a weekly log to the Director of Internships, detailing experiences and observations on the job, types of work done, and number of hours worked.

At the end of the internship, the student submits two papers. The Final Report considers values, experiences and skills acquired during the internship and a self-evaluation of performance on the job. The Special Project Report consists of a review of the Special Project from its inception to its completion, examining it in terms of whether it adhered to its timeline and budget, describing why these had to be modified (if they were), describing the process as it actually happened in comparison with the way it was planned, and the presentation of the final product.

Evaluation

Written and oral evaluations are done midway through the internship and at its conclusion by the internship supervisor in the business, and by the Director of Internships at the college. Other factors considered in the evaluation are the Final Report, the Special Project Prospectus, and the Special Project Report.

Summary

This background, attempting to provide a clear picture of the various stages and components of the internship, probably doesn't vary widely from other programs in colleges and universities across the country. However, one component

which may be different is the requirement of a Special Project. In the following pages, this will be presented in detail, and during the poster session, examples of some of the Special Projects completed will be shown.

SPECIAL PROJECT

Requirements

In the Student Guidelines and Employer Guidelines in the Intern Handbook, the following instructions are given:

"Each student will be expected to complete a Special Project during the time of the Internship. The project should be one of value to the supervising agency, and should be instigated, planned and implemented by the student with advice and approval from the supervising agency and the supervising professor."

Deciding on the nature of the project and writing the prospectus are usually the most difficult aspects of the requirement. Once the blueprint is drawn, however, the student is able to proceed with it. The students usually find that the execution of their plans doesn't always match the blueprint, and adjustments must be made along the way. This is a valuable lesson in itself, and the student is asked to reflect on it in the Special Project Report at the conclusion of the internship.

For this to work as it should, it is essential to have a clear understanding with the supervisor about the goals for the project and for its evaluation.

Objectives

In determining that the Special Project could be a valuable learning experience for the students, the Division established the following objectives:

1. To provide the student with an opportunity to assume responsibility for the completion of a task which will benefit both the company and the student by means of:

    a. identifying the need (with the assistance of the supervisor)
    b. establishing goals and objectives
    c. providing the rationale
    d. identifying and securing resources
    e. determining a plan of action
    f. preparing a timeline

g. preparing a budget (the nature of the project and the company will determine if this is real or hypothetical).
h. submission of a finished product.

2. To provide the student with a professional product for her/his portfolio which will be tangible evidence of application of knowledge and professional abilities.

3. To provide a concrete assessment instrument for the division.

Prospectus

Students are required to prepare a prospectus for their project, according to the guidelines given. This prospectus is prepared following ongoing discussions with both the intern supervisor and the Director of Internships at the college. When the exact project is agreed upon, the prospectus is submitted.

Specific instructions are given for this in a separate section of the handbook, and are included at the conclusion of this paper.

Intern and Supervisor Responses

As indicated earlier in this paper, students are asked to reflect, in a final paper, on the project from its beginning to its completion, examining it in terms of adherence to timetable, budget, resources, etc. If modifications had to be made in these or other areas (and this frequently happened), students analyzed the reasons and learned from them. They also reviewed the plans as stated in the prospectus and compared them with the the actual implementation.

Student and supervisor comments written in the Special Project reports are usually very favorable toward the experience, and reflect some of the learning which has taken place. A few of the comments follow:

Project: "Wall of Honor" at Gordon Hospital, a permanent display to recognize donors.

"I really enjoyed working on this project. I feel that it is very worthwhile....It thrills me to know that something that I worked so hard to organize and put into action will be a semi-permanent concrete display to be placed in my local hospital. I used my time and skills to produce and promote something positive in my community." **Leigh Ann Waits, Public Relations major.**

Project: Creation of advertising budget for 1996 for Coldwell Banker Watson and Knox Real Estate.

"This project for me has been really fun and interesting. I've never been handed the responsibility of distributing $21,000. This was a big responsibility, but I believe that it will prove to be advantageous to the company when 1996 arrives. If the company will continue to track all calls and follow a budget, I believe that Coldwell Banker Watson and Knox Real Estate will prosper greatly in the long run." **Brooks McCommons, Public Relations major.**

From the Supervisor: "Brooks analyzed our advertising expenditures to determine which media was generating the most leads. He used the results of that survey to establish a budget for our advertising for 1996. He is very conscientious and willing to do whatever we asked of him."

Project: Creation of a tri-fold, two color brochure with photographs, specifically designed to meet the needs of educators interested in the services and programs provided to school age children by Floyd Medical Center.

"This was a relatively simple but particularly frustrating project. I felt that I had no real control over the flow of the project. I did gather all the information, write the copy, and create the layout, all of which were subjected to numerous approvals. I have learned to be patient and understanding throughout this process and I am very excited about my project." **Haley Walker, Journalism major.**

Project: Subject, state, regional, and coverage survey of the last five volumes of MissionsUSA, a 100,000 circulation magazine of the Baptist Home Mission Board "The project was challenging. I had to create a way to tally the results of the survey and publish my findings. I also had to find time apart from my other responsibilities to complete the project." **Maria Stinnett, Journalism major.**

Project: Five day activity book, including music, tap-, craft ideas, recreation ideas for Baptist Vacation Bible School for the Georgia Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, Inc. "I believe that my special project topic was appropriate and a good choice....Not only was this project extremely challenging for me, but it also provided the agency with another promotional materials option." **Lori Hollingsworth, Public Relations major.**

From the supervisor: "Lori began working on a new project for our agency. She put together an activity book for children to use during Vacation Bible School. This project required independent thinking and creativity. Lori came up with a story line and enlisted an artist to help with the project. Although the entire project was not complete when Lori left, she did most of the work for this new endeavor."

From the supervisor: Project: Full responsibility for two fifteen minute cable news programs, "Gwinnett Report", Batten Communications, Inc. "Steven was ultimately placed in charge of a weekly cable news program, "Gwinnett Report." His work improved considerably from show #2 to show #10. He improved his editing and shooting skills and learned a little about basic television reporting and producing."

Some of the projects do not end as successfully as those above, but they are worth noting, especially in the evaluation of student work and as information for the student outcome and program assessment features. Sample negative comments follow:

Project: To complete three promotional videotapes for regularly scheduled commercial sit-coms, commercial television station. "It seems a bit unfair that I should have had so many problems this summer (I refer to it as my hell summer) because I worked so hard and long so that everything would go well....I did enjoy doing my special project. My only gripe would be that I was only practicing and polishing something that I already knew how to do. I was given little direction to do anything new and different. And when I finally came up with what I thought was a brilliant plan, my original idea of the videos was apparently set in stone, disallowing me to pursue other, more appealing options. I left with very little." **Angela Parise, Broadcast major.**

From the supervisor: "Angela completed four promotional announcements as her internship project. Each one was very good and entertaining plus they sold the message to the audience. The whole project was a success. Angela has been one of the best interns we've had in the last two years I have been involved with the program. She will no doubt be an asset to any company that hires her after graduation."

From the supervisor: Project: Listener survey for commercial FM station. "Brian worked on a listener survey for our station. It enabled us to better ascertain the desires of our radio audience. I feel the information would have been more helpful if he had gotten additional surveys completed. My request was for 300-500. Nevertheless we will use the information."

From the supervisor: Project: Feature article for company magazine. "(We) gave her explicit direction for accomplishing this project....She chose to do the story 'her way,' and the first draft came in the form of a brief theme paper. It was two weeks late, unfinished and unpolished. When asked to revise the story...she produced another problem-filled document. Her internship is over, we have missed our deadline with a national company, and the article must now be rewritten by another staff member."

Summary

As can be seen, the successful (or unsuccessful) completion of the Special Project reveals an assortment of information concerning whether or not the student and the division have met their stated educational outcome goals. Usually, performance in the internship and on the special project will parallel the student's performance in the classroom.

The requirement has proved to be a valuable one. Some of the projects are outstanding, some are average, and some are poor, but in every case, regardless of the quality, the students have learned a great deal about the process and about themselves.

Attachment A

SPECIAL PROJECT

Each student will complete a Special Project as an integral part of the internship. This project should comprise approximately one-third of the student's work, and ideally will result in a tangible product. The primary responsibility for the design and implementation of the project belongs to the student.

Each project will differ according to the type of internship, but it should be an effort that is of practical value to the company. It should also demonstrate the professional abilities of the student. A project that is primarily "busy work" or requires less than professional skills will not be acceptable.

In choosing the project, the student and supervisor should discuss the needs of the company and attempt to match them with the abilities and training of the student. The project should be one that is feasible and obtainable within the time framework and within any other internal or external constraints (such as equipment, support staff, budget, etc.) that might be present. Matching the project to the time and staff available is often the most challenging part of the decision. Students are reminded that the project must be both worthwhile and feasible.

In making the choice of project, the student should confer with the supervisor and the supervising professor during the concept or brainstorming stage, the narrowing down or focusing stage, and prior to the writing of the Prospectus for the project.

The prospectus must be written by the student and approved by the supervising professor in order to proceed with the project.

Because projects differ so widely, a few types of projects that have been done in the past are listed here:

1. **Series of feature articles (journalism)**
2. **Production of a variety of videotapes (television)**
3. **Preparation of Annual Report (public relations)**
4. **Preparation of other types of publications necessary to the organization (public relations)**
5. **Organization and planning for Special Event (public relations)**
6. **Listener Survey (radio)**
7. **Special Promotions (radio)**
8. **Planning, staffing and conducting children's day camps (speech communication)**
9. **Feature articles in company magazines (journalism, public relations)**
10. **Design and execution of public relations plan for company**

SPECIAL PROJECT PROSPECTUS

There are several acceptable formats for a project proposal. Following are two which you might consider for your use. They will provide the same basic information, but one may be more suitable for your particular project than the other. Study them carefully and select the one which serves your purposes best. The purpose of a prospectus is to acquaint the one to whom it is submitted with the nature of your idea, how you plan to accomplish it, how you will implement it, and how much it will cost.

FORM 1

I. OBJECTIVES: this should contain a statement of your objectives, goals, and the end product desired.

II. RATIONALE: provide the rationale for the project; i.e., why does it need to be done? what needs does it meet? target audience?

III. RESOURCE PERSONNEL: personnel involved (professional, staff, support staff, etc.), resource people, outside contacts to be made, etc.

IV. PLAN OF ACTION: this should contain your plan for reaching the goals. How do you plan to meet your goals?

V. TIMETABLE: this section should contain a timetable for accomplishing the segments of the project in a logical, reasonable order, in order to have the project completed by the target date.

VI. BUDGET: this section should contain best estimate and actual quotations of cost (whether or not any money actually changes hands.) The following items should be considered in the budget, though you may not have all categories on any given project:

A. Staff time, salaries, honoraria, etc.
B. Equipment use, Supplies
C. Postage and Telephone
D. Use of Facilities
E. Travel
F. Printing and Duplicating
G. Advertising
H. Other

Consult with your supervisor (and the Director of Internships, if necessary) about the preparation of your budget. You should try to give the best estimate of direct and indirect costs for the project, even if it is all done within the office with regularly budgeted funds. Use prorated figures for expenditures such as telephone, facilities.

A slightly more specialized form follows. For some projects it might be more suitable.

FORM 2

I. SITUATION SURVEY. What is the present situation? Why does it need to be changed? How will your project affect the current situation?

II. OBJECTIVES. What do you hope to accomplish? What are your goals? For whom is the project intended? Target audience?

III. METHODS TO MEET OBJECTIVES. How do you plan to accomplish your goals and objectives? What are the steps you will follow?

IV. CREATIVE RATIONALE. Explain each method mentioned above. Provide detailed explanations of implementation.

V. EXAMPLES. Provide concrete examples of tangible projects or items, if these are to be utilized.

VI. BUDGET. Give a breakdown of actual and/or estimated costs for the successful completion of the project.

By using one or both of these forms as a guide, you should be able to present a complete prospectus for your project.

REMEMBER TO CONFER WITH YOUR SUPERVISING PROFESSOR AS YOU PROCEED IN THE SELECTION OF YOUR SPECIAL PROJECT, GETTING HER/HIS APPROVAL FOR THE GENERAL IDEA AND FOR THE SPECIFIC GOALS. ALSO, WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR AS YOU DECIDE ON THE PROJECT. BEFORE PREPARING THE PROSPECTUS, YOU NEED TO HAVE THE PROJECT CONCEPT APPROVED BY BOTH YOUR SUPERVISOR AND BY YOUR SUPERVISING PROFESSOR.

The Prospectus must be presented to your supervising professor and approved by her/him and the supervisor before any significant amount of work is done on the project. It is due at or very near the beginning of the work. IF THIS TIME REQUIREMENT IS NOT MET, THE PROJECT IS SUBJECT TO PENALTY.

The Special Project has the potential of being one of your best learning experiences. The prospectus is the pathway to accomplish it.